



State of Connecticut COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 2, Hartford, CT 06103

Promoting Equality and Justice for all People

Education Committee Public Hearing – March 4, 2022

CHRO Testimony Regarding

HB 5283 – AAC the Education Cost Sharing Grant Formula and the Funding of Other Grant Education Programs

HB 5280 -- An Act Concerning the Provision of Bilingual Education in Connecticut

HB 5282 - AAC the Inclusion of Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies in the Public School Curriculum and Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic Subgroups

Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee, the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities appreciates the chance to submit testimony in support of HB 5283, HB 5280, and HB 5282.

HB 5283 – AAC the Education Cost Sharing Grant Formula and the Funding of Other Grant Education Programs

As the state entity charged with enforcing Connecticut's antidiscrimination statutes, including those protecting students, the CHRO is well aware of the racial and economic inequities that persist in the state's education system. The \$639 million racial funding gap¹ in the education funding system as of 2020, a number that has only continued to grow since, is yet another indication of how the current system is failing students of color. This funding gap translates to school districts with majority-BIPOC populations spending approximately \$2,300 less per student than majority white districts.² The CHRO is supportive of this bill's aim to deal with these inequities in FY 2025 when federal COVID-19 relief funds expire.

In addition, this bill provides needs-based funding to school choice programs. Student participants in Connecticut's two largest school choice programs – magnet schools and charter schools – are majority students of color. In fact, roughly 75 percent of magnet school students³ and 90 percent of charter students are students of color.⁴ Providing additional funding that is based on the individual learning needs of students is a step in the right direction.

Reducing the racial disparities in education funding is a critical step towards addressing the longstanding racial and economic barriers that exist in Connecticut. The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities encourages the Education Committee to support this important bill.

¹ School and State Finance Project. (2020). Racial Disparities in Connecticut Education Funding. New Haven, CT: Author. Retrieved from <http://ctschoolfinance.org/resources/uploads/files/Racial-Disparities-in-CT-Education-Funding.pdf>.

² Ibid.

³ School and State Finance Project. (2021). Guide to Connecticut's Magnet Schools. Hamden, CT: Author Retrieved from <https://ctschoolfinance.org/resource-assets/Guide-to-CTs-Magnet-Schools.pdf>.

⁴ School and State Finance Project. (2021). Guide to Connecticut's Magnet Schools. Hamden, CT: Author Retrieved from <https://ctschoolfinance.org/resource-assets/Guide-to-CTs-Magnet-Schools.pdf>.

HB 5280 – AAC the Provision of Bilingual Education in Connecticut

The CHRO also supports HB 5280, An Act Concerning the Provision of Bilingual Education in Connecticut. One of the greatest tools in the fight against discrimination is language learning. Immersion in a different language broadens the mind, exposing learners to different cultures and ways of thinking. Supporting programs like those funded by this bill is crucial in eliminating discrimination in our state. The bill's provision to increase funding for multiple fiscal years will also help schools budget more effectively, ensuring rigorous bilingual education can become a permanent program.

HB 5282 - AAC the Inclusion of Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies in the Public School Curriculum and Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic Subgroups

The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) supports HB 5282, which adds Asian American and Pacific Islander studies to the required curriculum in Connecticut's schools. CHRO is particularly interested in this issue because, as the state agency that receives and investigates charges of discrimination (including school bullying because of one's protected status), working to eliminate discrimination in schools should eliminate discrimination in other places.

Over five (5) percent of the state's residents are Asian or Pacific Islander (AAPI).⁵ The percentage of CT public school students who identify as AAPI is also over 5%.⁶ AAPI people have lived in this country for centuries and their history is all of our history. Unfortunately, school curricula and the textbooks used frequently focus on history that excludes the contributions of members of minority groups. While there is the requisite acknowledgement of "Black History Month" in February and "Women's History Month" in March, the history of AAPI people is frequently seen as separate and not a significant part of US and Connecticut history. Adding these categories to the curriculum allows all students to see these and other frequently marginalized groups of people as participants in our state and country throughout its history – part of America. When students do not see themselves and their cultures as participants in the world that they live in, they are less engaged. Not teaching the history of all of the various groups that make up the American culture, allows other students to devalue those contributions. This then leads to marginalization of these cultures, which follows students outside of school and into the work environment.

Recent legislation has added Holocaust and genocide studies and Black and Latino Studies to the curriculum, marking these as important areas of knowledge for our students. AAPI Studies, as

⁵ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/CT/PST045221>

⁶

https://edsight.ct.gov/SASStoredProcess/guest?_program=%2FCTDOE%2FEdSight%2FRelease%2FReporting%2FPublic%2FReports%2FStoredProcesses%2FEnrollmentReport&_district=State%20of%20Connecticut&_year=Trend&_subgroup=Race&_select=Submit

well as studies of the cultures of all Connecticut students, should be a part of school curriculum as well.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of HB 5282 and urge the committee to support this important bill.